

# The Athenian Mercury:

Saturday, July 8. 1693.

Quest. 1. **N**ot long since walking in a Grove adjacent to my House, I found a Minister walking alone, very solemnly reading a little Treatise, entituled, *A Display of the Happiness of the Blessed*, I only saw the Title on the top of the two Pages wherein he was reading, for he shut the Book and put it into his Pocket.

After some little Interrogatories (usual among Strangers accidentally meeting, when either has a mind to discourse the other) we fell into several Miscellaneous Discourses; among the rest, Concerning the State of Humane Nature, and of this Globe we inhabit.

I found he was a very good Philosopher, and understood our more abstruse Astronomy very well; he told me he had a Glass of a Foot long, through which he could more exactly discern the Faces of *Jupiter*, *Satellites*, and of the *Stellulae Circumsturniales* (whereof he affirmed there were 13) than we can that of the Moon in our longest Telescopes. He told me some very surprising Observations he had made on that, partly Lucid and partly Opaque Star we see revolve continually about its Axis in *Collo celi*. He asked me my Name, and told me when he came that way next (which would not be very long) he would Communicate to me a perfect Theory of the Moon's Motion, which he had only Confirm'd by Observations, having before found it out *a priori*, from a New and (from any of ours) very different Hypothesis of Nature, whereof he hinted to me several very surprising Particulars, one of the Results whereof was, That our Globe did very near approach its final Dissolution, and that by a Chain of Natural Causes.

He told me he heard I was about to act such a certain thing, which if I did it would prove very unsuccessful: This surprized me more than any thing he had yet spoken, being Conscious to my self I had never Communicated it to any Person living. I immediately heard something like a great Stone that seemed to fall out of a Tree hard by, whereat turning my Head to see, my Passion to my very great Amazement, was wholly vanish'd.

Sirs, *This is Matter of Fact, and true, but its seeming so incredible in it self has hinder'd me some time from imparting it to any but one of my Intimate Friends, who has at length prevail'd on me to send it to you: Pray, your speedy Thoughts thereon?*

Ans. Since we can have no more than your own Attestation for the Truth of this odd Story, we ought at least to have had your Name, that We might have better guess'd whether you are serious in what you relate: If you are, and a Person capable of making a sober Judgment of things, (as nothing to the contrary appears by your way of Writing) it makes the Business still stranger. However, 'tis not impossible, at least according to your Relation, but that this strange Philosopher might step aside suddenly into the Wood, when you did not mind him, and so lost the sight of him — But if he comes again according to his Word, you may try if you can lay hold of him, and feel whether he's a Ghost or Flesh and Blood, and when you have done thus, and we heard from you, you may Expect to hear from us again.

Quest. 2. *Being now to appear upon the Stage of the World, and having nothing to recommend me to the Spectators, but my so, so, ingenious Education; the Consideration whereof prompts me to some Noble, Sublime, and generous Design, but my Pocket (Infelix Paupertas!) will not reach it; and being turmoil'd with Consultations, what to do in this matter, and coming to no Definitive Conclusion, I have resolv'd at last to assume a Levitical Gown, and Ecclesiastical Robes, thinking*

*that very suitable to my present Condition (as I can Cheat, Impose, Lie, Dissemble, and God a Mercy, any thing for a Fat Benefice) but thereupon I desire to be satisfied first, Whether those Antecedent Particulars are not consistent with, and applicable to Divinity? Or whether they will not contribute to the Completion of a true Son of the Church; and herein you'll oblige your Scholar in Theology?*

Ans. Looky! little Witty Friend of ours! Those notable Qualifications, which you so modestly mention, are such pretty things, that if you can but make out your Title to 'em, you need not in the least Question your Preferment — to the Whipping-Post or Gallows we mean, or a *Jacobite Ordination* — but if you have a design to scandalize the Gown, by getting fairly and canonically into't, as some have attempted before you, we doubt you as well as they, come a Reign or two too late, since Thanks be to God, the Sees are not now fill'd with such Bishops, as will suffer either *Apes* or *Wolves* to creep into the Fold, tho' never so well disguis'd in *Sheeps-cloathing*.

Quest. 3. *Gentlemen, I received this morning a Letter from a Gentleman (the Copy of which I send you) whom I know loves me very well, the Contents much trouble me; I am advis'd to send it to you for your Solution of it, as hoping it to have a better meaning than it outwardly bears: Pray be speedy in your Answer, for I am very uneasy about it?*

Madam,

**T**O be plain, I most mortally Hate you, and most vehemently Love and Esteem those which any ways recriminate or injure you, and have so strongly and implacably fixed all my Kindness, Love and Affections towards you as Contagious and Mortal as the rankest Poyson, so constant and immutable is and ever shall be the Spleen I have to you, that I now irrevocably recall the tender Love I ever have or had for so perfidious and ungrateful a Person as your self, and could for satisfaction Wish that my Sword could but Sacrifice from my Hand your hateful Life, which I can as freely without remorse devote to my just Revenge and Rage, which is the only way I have to make you sensible of the extream Passion I have for you.

Tours,

R. W.

Ans. If you are willing to flatter your self, you may fancy he design'd only some part of the Letter to be read by you, the rest a cover and sham only to conceal it from some Persons, whom he'd not have see it — for read it thus and 'tis a *right-Lovers-Letter*.

Madam, To be plain, I most vehemently Love and Esteem you; and have strongly fixed all my Kindness, Love and Affections towards you, so constant and immutable is, and ever shall be the tender Love I ever have or had for you, and could for satisfaction wish that my Sword could but sacrifice my Life, which I can as freely without remorse, Devote to make you sensible of the extream Passion, I have for you.

Quest. 4. *Gentlemen, a certain young Gentleman having a great veneration and esteem for a Lady, and they both sympathizing, enter'd into a vow never to marry any but each other. The Father of the Daughter, upon notice to him given hereof, extorts (she being in a Consternation and surprize) a Vow likewise contrary in effect than the other, and upon the Non-observance of the same denounceth and imprecates terrible Judgments to his own Blood. Sirs, This is plain matter of Fact, without Extenuation or Aggravation of their several circumstances, whereupon you are desired to resolve, which of the two*

above





abovementioned *vows* is most obligatory; and herein you'll oblige very humble Servant, tho' unknown?

*Ans.* She was not at Liberty to make a second Vow, being before oblig'd by the first, which for that Reason must still hold.

*Quest. 5.* Having been in Company with those that are Atheistically inclin'd, and having been prevail'd upon by the Validity of their Arguments to imbibe some of their Principles, (yet not without some reluctancy, my Education being far different,) I presume to obtrude this Query to you, Whether there be any such place as Hell in fact, or whether it be us'd as a Representation of the horror, that the Conscience of one's guilt and wickedness must needs administer.

*Ans.* Poor Man! you write indeed as if you were a great Judge of the Validity of an Argument. To your Question, we have often enough repli'd in our former Papers — that there *will* and *must* be such a place as Hell, and actual corporeal Torments therein, as soon as there are any Body's to be imprison'd in it; and besides, that if there were no actual Fire, which we believe there will be, and that Eternal too, from Gods express Word, yet horror of Conscience, wou'd be Hell enough, and so ill men will find it without Repentance.

*Quest. 6.* Gentlemen, I am a Person of a very fair Estate, and thinking my self obliged to keep it in a Family, wherein it had continued in a long, and uninterrupted Succession from Father to Son; I married a young Woman, who had nothing but her Beauty, and seeming Virtue to recommend her, tho' of Birth and Quality equal to mine; her Deportment was so Easie and Natural, her Looks methought so unaffectedly Modest, that I had not the least whispering Jealousie of her Lewdness or Dishonesty, but I was quickly undeceived, and upon my Marriage found, by Tokens evident enough, that she was no Maid; notwithstanding which Discovery, she so well knew how to improve her Charms, not the least powerful, that my Anger (so Blind is Love) was soon turned into Gentleness, and my fond Caresses gave her clear Signs of my revived Passion: But to sum up my Misfortunes, five Months had scarce run out, before my Virtuous Spouse was Brought to Bed, dying her self the very Moment of her Delivery, and leaving me the Unhappy Keeper, not Father of a Son. Upon the whole, I shall be Obliged to you, if you will do me the Favour to resolve me these Queries:

1. Whether this Child ought in foro Conscientiae to Inherit my Estate, or any part of it?

2. Whether I am Obliged to take any more Care of him than of a Stranger laid at my Door, since he is really so to me?

3. Whether I may not justly dispose of him to those Wandring People, who for a small piece of Money take Children and Educate them as their own, and so rid my self for ever of that which would otherwise be a perpetual Shame and Trouble to me?

*Ans.* to 1st. Query. ] Neither, in Equity, whatever he might by the Law, supposing the Case really be as you represent it — He not being your Child, and therefore having no manner of Right to your Estate: But if the Lady brought any Fortune, the Case We think is something alter'd, for he is certainly her Child tho' not yours.

2. To the Second, Whether you are Oblig'd to take any more Care of him than of a Child laid at your Door, since he's really so to you — We Answer, He is more to you, for he was Born in your House; nay, wou'd We believe in Law recover the Estate, being born in Wedlock. However, there is difference enough between taking No Notice of him, and making him your Heir, as will appear further from our Answer to the

3 Qu. Whether you may not justly Dispose of him to those Wandring People who for a small piece of Money take Children and Educate them as their own, and so rid your self for ever of what would else be a perpetual Shame and trouble? — We Answer, No, for the innocent Child will have a very hard Fortune to be bred a Rogue because his Mother was a — and if he's Committed to those careful Tutors you talk of, no better can be expected than that he shou'd be brought up to the Whipping-Post or Gallows.

But there is a middle way between both these Inconveniencies — You may Convey him immediately to some Honest tho' Poor Person at a distance from your self, and there let him have *Honest Education*, without knowing what he is, 'till of Age to go abroad, when you may put him young to some Master of a Ship, and Oblige him to leave him in the *Indies*, or some remote place, having taken Care there for his Subsistence, and something wherewith to begin the World; all which is scarce more than Charity wou'd Oblige you to do, if in a Capacity, for a Foundling, or Child laid at your Door.

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